

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 BANGKO 11373 01 OF 02 200734Z
ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 PM-05 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15
CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 PA-01 ICA-11 IO-13 MCT-01
HA-05 /093 W
-----096328 200758Z /11

R 200520Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3311
INFO AMCONSUL HONG KONG
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMCONSUL UDORN
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
CINCPAC HONOLULU
DIA WASHDC

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 BANGKOK 11373

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD AND COMIPAC

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PBOR, PINS, CB, TH
SUBJECT: SUPREME COMMAND BRIEFING ON INSURGENCY UPSURGE ON
THAI-CAMBODIAN
BORDER

REF: (A) BANGKOK 6238, (B) BANGKOK 11000, (C) UDORN 0092

SUMMARY: SENIOR THAI OFFICIALS ARE SERIOUSLY CONCERNED BY
RECENT UPSURGE OF ACTIVITY BY THAI INSURGENTS, ESPECIALLY
ALONG THE LONG BORDER WITH CAMBODIA. COORDINATED COMMUNIST
PARTY OF THAILAND (CPT) AND KHMER ROUGE ATTACKS HAVE OCCURRED
WITH INCREASING FREQUENCY IN THE PAST SIX WEEKS, AND NEARLY
1000 THAI VILLAGERS HAVE BEEN ABDUCTED. RTG ASSUMES THAT
THE CPT IS ATTEMPTING TO ESTABLISH A "LIBERATED AREA" IN
THAILAND AND THAT THE KHMER ROUGE, UNDER INSTRUCTION FROM PHNOM
PENH, WISH TO CREATE A CORDON SANITAIRE ALONG THE FULL BORDER.

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 BANGKO 11373 01 OF 02 200734Z

END SUMMARY.

1. THE THAI ARMY SUPREME COMMAND J-2 OFFICIAL VOICED SERIOUS
CONCERN TO US APRIL 14 OVER THE COORDINATED COMMUNIST PARTY
OF THAILAND (CPT) AND KHMER ROUGE ATTACKS WHICH HAVE
OCCURRED RECENTLY ALONG MOST OF THE COMMON THAI-CAMBODIAN
BORDER. IN A PRIVATE BRIEFING, J-2 POINTED OUT THAT THE

NUMBER OF INCIDENTS ALONG THE BORDER TOTALED 100 IN MARCH, OR THE SAME MONTHLY LEVEL AS IN 1977, DESPITE PRESUMED AGREEMENT BETWEEN FONMIN UPPADIT AND CAMBODIAN DEPUTY PM IENG SARY TO WORK TO REDUCE THE FRICTION. THIRTY OF THE INCIDENTS WERE SERIOUS. EVEN MORE DISTURBING THAN THE NUMBERS IS THE PATTERN OF COOPERATION BETWEEN THE CPT AND KHMER ROUGE AND THE ABDUCTION OF THAI CITIZENS, WHO WERE TAKEN ACROSS THE BORDER INTO CAMBODIA. SINCE THE FIRST SIGNIFICANT GROUP ABDUCTION OCCURRED LAST OCTOBER, 996 THAIS HAVE BEEN KIDNAPPED BY THE TERRORISTS. OF THESE ONLY 42 HAVE ESCAPED AND RETURNED TO THAILAND. MOREOVER, FOUR MAJOR ATTACK-ABDUCTIONS HAVE OCCURRED IN THE PAST SIX WEEKS, IN CHANTABURI PROVINCE, TWICE IN BURIRMA'S LAHANSAI DISTRICT, AND APRIL 9 AT BAN KRUAT DISTRICT, ALSO IN BURIRAM.

2. BASED PARTLY ON INFORMATION FROM THE ESCAPEES, J-2 TOLD US THAT THE RTG BELIEVES THAT THE KHMER ROUGE WANT TO CREATE A NO-MAN'S LAND THE LENGTH OF THE THAI-CAMBODIAN BORDER TO PREVENT CAMBODIANS FROM ESCAPING INTO THAILAND AND TO STOP THAI AND KHMER RESISTANCE FORCES (KHMER SEREI) FROM ENTERING CAMBODIA. AS FOR CPT MOTIVES, THE TERRORISTS WISH TO BUILD BASES IN THE BORDER AREAS OF THAILAND. IRONICALLY, THIS NEW APPROACH STEMS FROM COMMUNIST FAILURE POLITICALLY, J-2 SAID. ACCORDING TO COMMUNIST DOCTRINE, THE CPT SHOULD BUILD MASS SUPPORT. INCREASED AWARENESS AMONG THAI,

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 BANGKO 11373 01 OF 02 200734Z

LEARNED FROM REFUGEES, OF WHAT COMMUNISM IS LIKE IN CAMBODIA AND LAOS HAS MADE THAI VILLAGERS EVER MORE INFERTILE GROUND FOR POLITICAL PROSELYTIZING. CPT HAS THUS TURNED TO MILITARY-TERRORIST MEANS TO GAIN INFLUENCE. DESPTIE THE POLITICAL FAILURE THIS REPRESENTS, THE RESULTS ARE DISASTROUS FOR THAI CITIZENS IN THE BORDER AREAS. J-2 BELIEVES THAT THE CPT OBJECTIVE IN 1978 IS TO SET UP A "LIBERATED AREA" IN THAILAND ALONG THE BORDER. OVERALL IN THE NORTHEAST, RTG SUPPRESSION EFFORTS HAVE BEEN FAIRLY SUCCESSFUL, J-2 EXPLAINED, BUT, UNFORTUNATELY, THE TERRORISTS HAVE MADE PROGRESS IN THE STRATEGICALLY SIGNIFICANT BORDER AREA, ESPECIALLY THE LAHANSAI, BURIRAM PROVINCE, "CORRIDOR" TO THE HEARTLAND OF THE COUNTRY LYING NEAR BANGKOK. J-2 PREDICTED THAT INCIDENTS ON THE BORDER EXCLUSIVELY WITH KHMER ROUGE WOULD GO DOWN, BUT THOSE INVOLVING THE CPT WOULD RISE, AS THE CPT IN EFFECT ASSUMES THE FRONT LINE DEFENSE FOR CAMBODIA.

3. THE RTAF HAS CONDUCTED AIR STRIKES AGAINST MILITARY TARGETS IN THE AREA BUT NO GROUND INCURSIONS INTO CAMBODIA WERE MADE. THE TERRAIN IS VERY ROUGH, AND CONSIDERABLE CAUTION HAS TO BE EXERCISED TO PROTECT THE LIVES OF THE

THAIS ABDUCTED. SOME BOMBING RUNS HAVE BEEN CONDUCTED TO
CREATE CONFUSION AND HELP THE THAI VILLAGERS TO ESCAPE.
J-2 IS UNSURE OF THE RESULTS.

4. COMMENTING ON THE KHMER ROUGE ROLE, J-2 SAID THAT TWO
YEARS AGO, THE RTG THOUGHT THAT PERHAPS PHNOM PENH COULD
NOT CONTROL ITS LOCAL MILITARY COMMANDERS. NOW THERE IS
AGREEMENT THAT PHNOM PENH IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE KHMER
ROUGE ACTIVITIES ALONG THE BORDER. (CPT COORDINATES BUT
OPERATES UNDER ITS OWN DIRECTION.) J-2 OFFICIAL SAID HE
WAS "ABSOLUTELY CONVINCED PHNOM PENH COULD CONTROL THE
KHMER ROUGE ON THE BORDER." AS ONE BIT OF EVIDENCE, J-2
SAID THAT THE RTG HAS INTERCEPTED RADIO MESSAGES ORDERING
THE KHMER ROUGE TO CONTROL VILLAGES IN SIEM REAP PROVINCE,
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 04 BANGKO 11373 01 OF 02 200734Z

WHERE THE WHOLE VILLAGE WAS APPARENTLY PLANNING TO ESCAPE
TO THAILAND. THE RTG BELIEVES, HOWEVER, THAT THE ONLY
WAY TO END CYCLES OF ACTION AND RETALIATION WITH CAMBODIA
IS TO DEVELOP POLITICAL RELATIONS AND DIALOGUE WITH PHNOM
PENH. THROUGH THIS APPROACH THE THAIS HOPE TO BE ABLE TO
HELP PHNOM PENH RELAX, BUILD TRUST, AND GRADUALLY REDUCE
AND THEN END BORDER CONFLICT. TO THIS END, THERE IS
AGREEMENT WITHIN THE RTG TO DOWNPLAY PUBLICLY THE BORDER
DIFFICULTIES WITH CAMBODIA, ESPECIALLY THE ROLE OF PHNOM
PENH, AND WORK FOR A MORE SENSIBLE RELATIONSHIP WITH
PHNOM PENH. THE OFFICIAL INDICATED THAT J-2 AGREES WITH

SECRET

NNN

SECRET

PAGE 01 BANGKO 11373 02 OF 02 200754Z
ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 PM-05 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15
CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 PA-01 ICA-11 IO-13 MCT-01
HA-05 /093 W

-----096707 200758Z /11

R 200520Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3312
INFO RUMJDH/AMCONSUL HONG KONG 2688

AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMCONSUL UDORN
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
CINCPAC HONOLULU
DIA WASHDC

S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 BANGKOK 11373

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD AND COMIPAC

THIS APPROACH.

5. J-2 ADDED THAT A LARGE PERCENTAGE OF THE INCIDENTS ON THE BORDER ARE SMALL-SCALE ACTION-REACTION TYPE INCIDENTS, INITIATED BY BOTH SIDES. KHMER RESISTANCE ACTIVITIES ALSO LEAD TO SOME ATTACKS.

6. SITUATION IN TRAT PROVINCE, THE STRIP OF THAILAND WEDGED BETWEEN THE GULF OF SIAM AND CAMBODIAN MOUNTAINS, ILLUSTRATES ANOTHER TYPE OF INCIDENT, INVOLVING A DISPUTE WHICH HAS LASTED OVER 100 YEARS. BANGKOK CONTENTS THAT THE SEA BOUNDARY SHOULD RUN FROM KILOMETER MARKER 72 ON ROUTE 318 SOUTH OF KHLONG YAI TO THE SOUTHERN TIP OF KO KUT ISLAND, WHILE PHNOM PENH MAINTAINS THAT THE LINE SHOULD RUN FROM KILOMETER MARKER 73 THROUGH THE HIGHEST POINT OF KO KUT ISLAND. THE DIFFERENCE IN USING THESE TWO METHODS TO DEFINE THE SEA FRONTIER AND THE CONTINENTAL SHELF IS CON-
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 BANGKO 11373 02 OF 02 200754Z

SIDERABLE. (IT WOULD ALSO BE OF CRITICAL IMPORTANCE IN DETERMINING OWNERSHIP OF PETROLEUM RESOURCES IN THE SEA.)

7. AS FOR THE THAIS WHO ARE ABDUCTED, J-2 SAID THAT VILLAGERS WHO HAVE ESCAPED REPORT THAT THE RAIDS INTO THAILAND ARE LED BY THAIS, SUPPORTED BY THE KHMER ROUGE. THE VILLAGERS ARE TAKEN TO ONE OF FIVE OR SIX TRAINING CAMPS, MOSTLY LOCATED FIVE TO TEN KILOMETERS INTO CAMBODIA (SEE BANGKOK 6238 FOR LOCATIONS). FOLLOWING THE ATTACK-ABDUCTION MARCH 5 FROM CHANTABURI PROVINCE, A NEW CAMP, "SCHOOL 403," HAS BEEN SET UP NEAR PAILIN, CAMBODIA. ABDUCTED VILLAGERS ARE INDOCTRINATED FOR ABOUT THREE MONTHS, BY THAIS. THEY RAISE THEIR OWN FOOD. KHMER ROUGE SOLDIERS PATROL THE VICINITY. AFTER THE INDOCTRINATION, THE CPT HOPES TO PLACE THE VILLAGERS BACK IN THAILAND AS SOLDIERS, PORTERS, WORKERS, OR FARMERS TO FEED THE CPT.

8. J-2 NOTED INCREASING FEAR AMONG THAIS ALONG THE BORDER. ACCORDING TO J-2, THE PEOPLE WANT TO REMAIN AND DEFEND THEMSELVES. THEY MUST BE MUCH BETTER TRAINED AND ARMED, J-2 ADDED. RTG IS CONSIDERING CONSOLIDATING VILLAGES IN BORDER AREAS FOR GENERAL SECURITY AT NIGHT. VILLAGERS WOULD

BE ABLE TO WORK THEIR PRESENT FIELDS DURING THE DAY. MILITARILY, J-2 SAID, THE RTG HAS ENOUGH FORCES, BUT THEY NEED TO BE BETTER ORGANIZED. OFFICIAL SAID THAT A UNIFIED COMMAND MUST BE ESTABLISHED IN EACH SECTOR. THAI FORCES ARE ALSO LACKING IN MOBILITY AND FLEXIBILITY. THEY NEED MORE HELICOPTERS, FOR EXAMPLE, J-2 SAID.

9. AS TWO FINAL NOTES, J-2 OFFICIAL SAID THAT THE SITUATION ON THE THAI-LAO BORDER WAS GREATLY IMPROVED, ESPECIALLY SINCE THE EXCHANGE OF HIGH LEVEL VISITS IN FEBRUARY AND MARCH.

10. LASTLY, THE RTG HAS A PHOTOGRAPH TAKEN BY A VILLAGER DURING THE ATTACK ON BAN KRUAT VILLAGE APRIL 9. INEXPLICABLY,
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 BANGKO 11373 02 OF 02 200754Z

CAUGHT IN THE PHOTOGRAPH IS AN OFFICIAL FROM THE SOVIET EMBASSY IN BANGKOK. THAIS ARE VERY INTERESTED IN THE MATTER, J-2 INDICATED.

11. COMMENT: THIS WAS A REALISTIC BRIEFING. TOP RTG OFFICIALS, INCLUDING PM KRIANGSAK, HAVE HUDDLED IN RECENT DAYS TO DISCUSS MEANS TO DEAL WITH WHAT IS PERCEIVED AS AN UPSURGE IN SERIOUS INCIDENTS AT THE INITIATIVE OF THE CPT, BOTH ON THE BORDER AND AGAINST POLICE AND OTHER OFFICIALS IN SATUN AND TRAT PROVINCES (REF. BECAUSE OF THE COMPLEXITY OF THE PROBLEM, INVOLVING PHNOM PENH, THE CPT, KHMER RESISTANCE, AND THE BORDER PATROL AND OTHER RTG FORCE DEPLOYMENTS AND COORDINATION, WE DO NOT ANTICIPATE THAT THESE DIFFICULTIES WILL YIELD QUICKLY TO SOLUTION. THEY WILL REMAIN A MAJOR POLITICAL AND SECURITY PROBLEM FOR THE ADMINISTRATION FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE.
WHITEHOUSE

SECRET

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: COUNTERINSURGENCY, BRIEFING MATERIALS, BORDER INCIDENTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 20 apr 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978BANGKO11373
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X1
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780168-1069
Format: TEL
From: BANGKOK
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780437/aaaabeww.tel
Line Count: 258
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: de3701ab-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 BANGKOK 6238, 78 BANGKOK 11000, 78 UDORN 92
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 16 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2908889
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SUPREME COMMAND BRIEFING ON INSURGENCY UPSURGE ON THAI-CAMBODIAN BORDER
TAGS: PBOR, PINS, CB, TH
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/de3701ab-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014